

KRAB NEWS

OCTOBER 1986

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A quarterly update from the Jack Straw Memorial Foundation

Back to the Future

For several years the resources and energy of the **Jack Straw Memorial Foundation** have been single-mindedly directed toward one goal—our eventual return to the air. Pursuing a frequency share-time arrangement with the Seattle School District's KNHC has become a long and arduous effort. You may wonder what keeps staff and board members' spirits up as we face inaccessible school district officials and endless hours preparing materials for a costly legal battle for which we see no need. What keeps us going now is the same vision which led to the creation of **KRAB** in the first place.

Our basic approach to programming was expressed in a March 1963 program guide:

"... we see our function at **KRAB** as filling the gaps— of supplementing the other stations, not competing with them... In other words, we play the material that would be suicide on the commercial stations, but which is sheer delight for us."

KRAB pioneered many of the concepts which are now fundamental to non-commercial broadcast service: absence of commercials, the opening of a radio frequency to the expression of any and all opinion, use of volunteer labor, informality.

Because of our belief in the intelligence of our listeners we encouraged the use of our channel as a soapbox, a forum for the expression of ideas. Our public affairs, discussion, spoken word and music programming have always been bold and wide-ranging. Inevitably, we have also been controversial. Nevertheless, in 1970 the FCC applauded our approach with these remarks:

"**KRAB** does not avoid programs because they are unusual or outspoken... As a matter of policy, **KRAB** is committed to providing the Seattle area with unusual, stimulating and extraordinary programs. **KRAB's** programming is meritorious... and most often attains those standards of taste and decency... that we should like to see more often in our broadcast media."

As we come across years of letters, program guides, meeting minutes, and press clippings while settling into our new offices upstairs at 2212 S. Jackson, we are frequently reminded of our original purposes. They are as meaningful now as they ever were. "One has only to read the recent "Audience Building Task Force Report" distributed by **National Public Radio** to its affiliate stations and others to sense the need for an independent station like **KRAB**.

The **NPR** report addresses areas identified as "barriers to increased listening and audience growth." It sets up a series of strategies for doubling the public radio listening audience in five years. Many of the goals seem reasonable enough: improved staff salaries and training, upgrading of overall program quality and "air sound," better staff communication within stations, and the sharing of program and fund-raising expertise.

However, the doubling of audience cannot help but put tremendous pressure on programming. **NPR** is an important part of the American radio scene and, therefore, the directives set forth in this report concern

us as listeners and as broadcasters. Will there be less of the truly unusual in an effort to achieve a broader appeal? We hope not, but we are wary.

The "call to action" contains some disturbing elements. The plan directs local stations to "begin to target expenditures in ways which will maximize audience growth and maximize return on investment"... and "... "System (i.e. **NPR**, **CPB**) financial resources must be directed toward those activities which will have the greatest effect on audience growth at any given time." This report in its original form also included a "list of safe/avoid classical music selections." A hit list of classical music?

This philosophy runs directly counter to everything **KRAB** has stood for and makes our return as crucial as ever. While we respect and learn from listeners all the time, we are not audience advocates. Our listeners have always been people who relished the adventure and challenge of discovery. While, as Bill Siemering of **WYYH** in Philadelphia has said, "no one is advocating audience shrinkage," our programming is our reason for being. Our desire is to remain independent of institutional restrictions in order to remain true to our programming goals. We have gained our distinction by leading the way in the kind of radio Siemering characterized as:

"... taking risks, ... challenging the way things have always been done, ... setting new standards which others now try to emulate. To emphasize the safe, the same, only aspiring to minimize listeners turning away, we underestimate our listeners and other bright curious people. ... Rather than just a minimalist monochrome we need to give them surprises, have bright colors, be bold, take risks. Most everything that attracts attention does so because it violates conventional wisdom and is done with excellence."

That just about says it all. We need **KRAB** back.

—E.S.

FRIENDS of KRAB

We need your help to get **KRAB** back on the air.

We want to organize a volunteer group, "**Friends of KRAB**," in hopes that the community will become more involved. "Participation could mean anything from helping in the office (answering phones, writing, stuffing envelopes) to getting the word out about our side of the story in the **KNHC** share-time proposal and application.

Come to Our Place.

On **Thursday evening November 13 at 7:00 P.M.** we will host an open house at our new offices at **2212 South Jackson Street**. If you are interested in meeting the staff and board and hearing about where we are and what you might do to help, **PLEASE COME**. We'd love to meet you!

Call the office at 325-5110 to RSVP so we'll know how many **FRIENDS** to expect. See you then.

OCTOBER '86

KRAB
2212 S. Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98144
206-325-5110

KRAB

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at Seattle, WA



courtesy of the New Yorker

"We'll be here at the center of your dial, bringing you middle-of-the-road music, with a moderate amount of talk, till a very sensible hour."

Let's Get Nostalgic

There were two programs which we used to listen to religiously, *Stu Witmer's show* and the *Carlos Hagen tapes*. We made a tape of one of Stu's last programs of East Asian music. We played it at the birth of our son. It's a real family treasure which we play at least once a month.

Listener, Mary Dombroski

Your Fondest Memories

We'd love to hear from you about your fondest memories of KRAB programs. In the next few newsletters we'll print some of them so we can all share that part of the past that was special to you. Send us a postcard or letter or call Marschel after 1 P.M.

MAILING LIST

Who do you know that we should know?

Please send us your name and address (if you are not already on our list) and names of friends and associates who might be interested in receiving the **KRAB NEWS**.

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE _____

YES WE'RE STILL LOOKING FOR A TYPE-WRITER (IBM selectric) and GOOD USED FURNITURE FOR THE OFFICE. Give us a call please.

The Jack Straw Memorial Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of non-commercial broadcasting.

Board of Directors: Kathy Cain, Ben Dawson, Nick Johnson, Gary Margason, Terry Morgan, Simon Ottenberg, Charles Reinsch, Lorraine Sakata, Libby Sinclair, Allan Swensson, Kathryn Taylor. Administrative Manager: Cynthia Griggs Streltsov